

I claim:

1. A video program transmission method for enabling a viewer to receive information useful for selectively blocking the viewing of television programming, said method comprising the steps of:
- a) transmitting a plurality of television channels to a viewer;
 - b) for each said channel in a first group of one or more of said channels, embedding program information comprising at least a value representing a level in first multi-level category for a program being transmitted on said each channel, said program information according to a first informational scheme;
 - c) for each said channel in a second group of one or more of said channels, embedding program information comprising at least a value representing a level in second multi-level category for a program being transmitted on said each channel, said program information according to a second informational scheme; and,
 - d) transmitting to said viewer first and second sets of configuration information, said first set of configuration information comprising at least a value representing a number of levels in said first multi-level category and descriptive names for said category and one or more of said levels in said first category according to said first informational scheme, said second set of configuration information comprising at least a number of levels in said second multi-level category and descriptive names for said second category and one or more of said levels in said second category according to said second informational scheme.

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2. The method of claim 1 wherein said step of embedding program information comprises, embedding in each of said television channels program information relevant to that television channel.

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3. The method of claim 2 wherein said step of embedding configuration information comprises embedding in each of said television channels program information relevant to that television channel.

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4. The method of claim 3 wherein said step of embedding said program information in each of said television channels comprises encoding and transmitting said program information as XDS data in said each television channel.

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5. The method of claim 4 wherein said step of embedding said configuration information in each of said television channels comprises encoding and transmitting said configuration information as XDS data in said each television channel.

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6. The method of claim 5 wherein said step of encoding and transmitting said configuration information comprises transmitting a separate XDS data packet containing the name of each of said levels in said informational scheme to which said configuration information relates.

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7. A method for selectively blocking video signals, said method comprising the steps of:

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- a) receiving first configuration information embedded in said first television channel, said first configuration information describing a first informational scheme, said first configuration information specifying, at least, numbers of levels in a first group of one or more multi-level categories of labels, in said first informational scheme;
- b) storing said first configuration information in a memory;
- c) receiving second configuration information embedded in said second television channel, said second configuration information describing a second informational scheme, said second configuration information specifying, at least, numbers of levels in a second group of one or more multi-level categories of labels, in said second informational scheme;
- d) storing said second configuration information in said memory;
- e) storing in said memory user preference information for each of said categories in each of said first and second informational schemes;
- f) receiving a first video signal comprising embedded information specifying at least, either one of said first or second informational schemes, and current levels in each of said one or more categories in said specified informational scheme;
- g) extracting said embedded information and comparing said extracted information with said stored preference information for said specified informational scheme;
- h) if the result of said comparison indicates that said first video signal should not be displayed, blocking said first video signal from being displayed on a video display; and,

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- i) if the result of said comparison indicates that said first video signal should be displayed, ~~allowing~~ said first video signal to be displayed on said video display.

5 8. The method of claim 7 wherein said step of receiving said first configuration information comprises tuning to a first television channel and receiving embedded information comprising said first configuration information.

10 9. The method of claim 8 wherein said step of receiving said second configuration information comprises tuning to a second television channel and receiving embedded information comprising said second configuration information.

15 10. The method of claim 9 wherein said first configuration information comprises descriptive text for two or more levels in each of said first group of categories and said second configuration information comprises descriptive text for two or more levels in each of said second group of categories.

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11. The method of claim 10 wherein said step of storing said user preference information comprises displaying on a display said descriptive text for labels in said first informational scheme and accepting from a user, and storing, user preference information for said first informational scheme said user preference information comprising a threshold level for each of said categories in said first informational scheme.

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- 5 12. The method of claim 11 wherein said step of storing said user preference information comprises setting a threshold level for a first category in said second informational scheme to a value equal to a threshold level set for a first category in said first informational scheme.
- 10 13. The method of claim 10 wherein said step of storing said first configuration information comprises storing in a first record in said memory a pointer to a second record containing a name for said first informational scheme.
- 15 14. The method of claim 13 wherein said step of storing said first configuration information comprises storing in said second record pointers to a set of one or more third records, each of said one or more third records containing a name of a category in said first informational scheme.
- 20 15. The method of claim 14 wherein said step of storing said first configuration information comprises storing in each of said third records pointers to a set of two or more fourth records, each of said two or more fourth records containing a name of a level in said category of said first informational scheme and a numeric value for said level.
- 25 16. Apparatus for selectively blocking a video signal, said apparatus comprising:
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- 5 (a) means for receiving configuration information, said configuration information comprising descriptive names for at least one multi-level category;
- (b) a memory;
- (c) means for storing said descriptive names in said memory;
- 10 (d) means for displaying at least one of said descriptive names on a display and prompting a user to enter user preference information relating to said category corresponding to said at least one of said descriptive names while said at least one of said descriptive names is displayed on said display means;
- (e) means for storing said user preference information in said memory;
- 15 (f) means for receiving a video signal comprising a program and embedded information about said program;
- (g) means for extracting said embedded information from said video signal;
- (h) comparison means for comparing said extracted embedded information to said stored user preference information;
- 20 (i) a switching means for blocking transmission of said video signal to a video display means; and
- (j) means responsive to said comparison means for causing said switching means to block transmission of said video signal to said video display means if said comparison means detects that said user preference information
- 25 identifies said extracted embedded information
- and
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- corresponds to a program which is to be blocked.

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